



Competitions never fail to motivate!

Soccer-specific speed training by Ralf Peter, DFB coach

You know how it goes: Every team has its slackers and its fakers — the players who run with teeth clenched and one eye on the coach, doing their best to make it look like they're going all out. But as we all know, sprint training is only effective if players really do run at top speed, putting in their maximum effort.

So the question is: How do you motivate the laziest players on your team to perform at their best? In this article, Ralf Peter suggests using competitive exercises — because not even slackers like to lose!

Organizing speed training

Let's begin with a few important guidelines you should always consider when organizing speed training sessions:

- Speed training should always be preceded by an intensive and comprehensive warm-up. Technique exercises are ideal for this.
- Effective speed training requires highly motivated players in good condition. It should always take place immediately after warm-up.
- Speed training with tired players is just as unproductive as monotonous speed drills.
- Vary the length and content of rest periods to ensure that players get optimal recovery time: e.g. short, intensive exercises followed by one- to two-minute breaks.
- After each player has had four or five turns, switch to a relatively long break consisting of simple but interesting shooting exercises.
- Speed training exercises should always fit players' ability level and should be soccer-specific whenever possible.
- Distances should be appropriate: short sprints of no more than five to 25 yards!
- Even though speed is your top priority, players must be able to handle the technical aspects of the exercise as well.
- Sprint training requires maximum effort,

i.e. top speed, in order to stimulate the muscles and get results.

High-speed dribbling with follow-up plays

With just a few changes, most traditional sprinting exercises can be made significantly

more motivational and more similar to match play. First of all, players should be required to react to a realistic visual starting signal (e.g. the ball moves or an opponent takes off). Second, the sprint to the ball should be followed by a high-speed, high-precision play (e.g. a carefully aimed shot), just as in actual match play. Competitions (two teams compete for points) also make players work harder and get them to run at top speed.

Sample exercises

The following exercises fulfill all these requirements. Any starting signal can be used for any exercise. Distances may be varied but should stay between the prescribed maximums and minimums. The name of each exercise includes the starting signal, the action to be performed and the follow-up play.

High-speed plays with the ball can make all the difference between victory and defeat!

70 Axel Thomsen





COMPETITIVE SPRINTING AND SHOOTING

1 Direction – decision – shot



Setup

- Divide players into two teams (A and B).
- The first player from each team stands at the inside corner of a triangle of cones.
- Place two balls about 20 yards in front of a goal with goalkeeper.
- The coach stands between the balls.

Sequence

- Starting signal: If the coach steps away from the goal, players run around the front cone to the ball (Path 1). If the coach steps toward the goal, they run around the rear cone to the ball (Path 2).
- The first player to touch the ball (= one point) is allowed to shoot at the goal and scores another point if successful.

2 Catch – sideways run – shot



Setup

- A goalkeeper stands in the goal.
- Divide players into two teams (A and B).
- Players stand at the starting cones.
- Place three poles (one-yard intervals) in front of each starting cone.
- Two players with one ball stand between the poles.
- Place another ball about 20 yards in front of the goal.

Sequence

- The players between the poles head the ball directly back and forth.
- When one of them catches the ball (starting signal), the players at the starting cone run sideways between the poles and then to the ball.
- The first player to touch the ball (= one point) is allowed to shoot at the goal and scores another point if successful.

3 Juggling – sprint – shot



Setup

- A goalkeeper stands in the goal.
- Divide players into two teams (A and B).
- The first player from each team stands in a three-yard-wide goal.
- Place two balls about 20 yards in front of the goal.
- The coach has another ball and stands in front of the small goals.

Sequence

- As long as the coach is juggling, players run sideways from cone to cone.
- When the coach drops the ball (starting signal), players run to the balls.
- The first player to touch the ball (= one point) is allowed to shoot at the goal and scores another point if successful.



COMPETITIVE SPRINTING AND SHOOTING

4 Head start - sprint - shot



Setup

- A goalkeeper stands in the goal.
- Divide players into two teams (A and B).
- Players stand at the starting cones.
- Place two additional cones behind and inside the starting cones.
- Place two balls about 20 yards in front of the goal.

Sequence

- Round 1: Team A gets a head start, i.e. the first player from A gives the starting signal for B by taking off toward the ball. Round 2: Team B gets a head start.
- The first player to touch the ball (= one point) is allowed to shoot at the goal and scores another point if successful.

5 Pass - run - shot



Setup

- A goalkeeper stands in the goal.
- Divide players into two teams (A and B).
- The coach has several balls and stands in the middle.
- Players stand at the starting cones, facing the coach.
- Place another cone two yards in front of each starting cone.

Sequence

- Starting signal: The coach plays a ball toward the goal.
- Players run around both cones (direction as shown) and then to the ball.
- The first player to touch the ball (= one point) is allowed to shoot at the goal and scores another point if successful.

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6 Raise arm – pass – shot



Setup

- A goalkeeper stands in the goal.
- Divide players into two teams (A and B).
- Players stand behind small goals with one ball each.

Sequence

- Starting signal: The coach raises one arm.
- Players pass through the small goals, run around them and then race to the balls.
- The first player to touch the ball (= one point) is allowed to shoot at the goal and scores another point if successful.

7 Ball drops – pass – shot



Setup

- A goalkeeper stands in the goal.
- Divide players into two teams (A and B).
- The first player from each team has a ball and stands in front of a small goal, facing away from the main goal (see diagram).
- Mark out a goal line beyond the small goals.
- Another player from each team stands at the penalty box.

Sequence

- Starting signal: The coach drops a ball.
- Players pass through the small goals and across the goal line, run around both lines and then race to the balls.
- The first player to touch the ball (= one point) is allowed to pass to his teammate in front of the goal, who finishes and scores another point if successful.

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8 Pass - back pass - shot



Setup

- Set up two goals with goalkeepers (50 yards apart).
- Divide players into two teams (A and B).
- The coach has several balls and stands in the middle.
- The first player from each team stands next to the coach.
- Another player from each team stands at a corner of the penalty box.

Sequence

- Starting signal: The coach passes toward Goal 2.
- The first two players run after the ball.
- The first player to touch the ball (= one point) passes back to GK 2.
- GK 2 receives the ball, takes it to the side and passes to the teammate of the player who played the back pass.
- The teammate finishes on Goal 1, scoring another point if successful.

9 Shot - sprint - shot



Setup

- Set up two goals with goalkeepers (50 yards apart).
- Divide players into two teams (A and B).
- The coach has several balls and stands in the middle.
- The first player from each team stands next to the coach.
- Place two balls about 20 yards in front of Goal 1.

Sequence

- Starting signal: The coach shoots at Goal 2.
- The first two players run to the balls at Goal 1.
- The first player to touch the ball (= one point) is allowed to shoot at the goal and scores another point if successful.

10 Receive - sprint - shot



Setup

- A goalkeeper stands in the goal.
- Divide players into two teams (A and B).
- Players stand at the starting cones.
- Place two additional cones behind and outside the starting cones.
- Two players with one ball stand between the starting cones.
- Place two more balls about 20 yards in front of the goal.

Sequence

- The players between the starting cones pass directly back and forth.
- When one of them stops the ball with the sole of the foot (starting signal), the players at the starting cones run around the rear cones and then to the ball.
- The first player to touch the ball (= one point) is allowed to shoot at the goal and scores another point if successful.